



THE COMPLEXITIES OF GRIEF: AND COPING MECHANISMS OF THE BEREAVED

Christy S. Schunn, LSCSW

Kansas Infant Death and SIDS Network, Inc.



THE NATURE OF GRIEF

Grief is a normal, natural, human response to loss.

- Grief operates by its own internal wisdom.
- Since grief is human, it's highly individual.
- Grief is the way one heals—the only way.

Rando, Therese A., (1984). Grief, Dying and Death.
Champaign, IL: Research Press Co.

WHY WE NEED HEALTHY GRIEVING

Past grief experiences set up expectations.

Past experiences identify coping strategies and defense mechanisms.

Subsequent grief can be slightly easier to cope with.



STAGES OF GRIEF

Progress in grief is better
visualized as
phases
rather than
stages.

TASKS OF GRIEF AND MOURNING

- ◉ To accept the reality of the loss.
- ◉ To work through to the pain of grief.
- ◉ To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing.
- ◉ To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life.

Worden, J. William (1991). Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Co. Inc.



GRIEF REACTIONS

- Shock/Numbness
- Disbelief/Denial
- Disorganization/Despair
- Depression/Isolation
- Yearning/Searching
- Awareness of death (anger, guilt)
- Reorganization/Acceptance

(Bowlby, Parkes, Engel, Kübler-Ross, Rando)

COMMON REACTIONS FROM:

Female

- Emotional
- Tearful
- Lonely
- Cheated
- Wants to talk
- Empty inside

Male

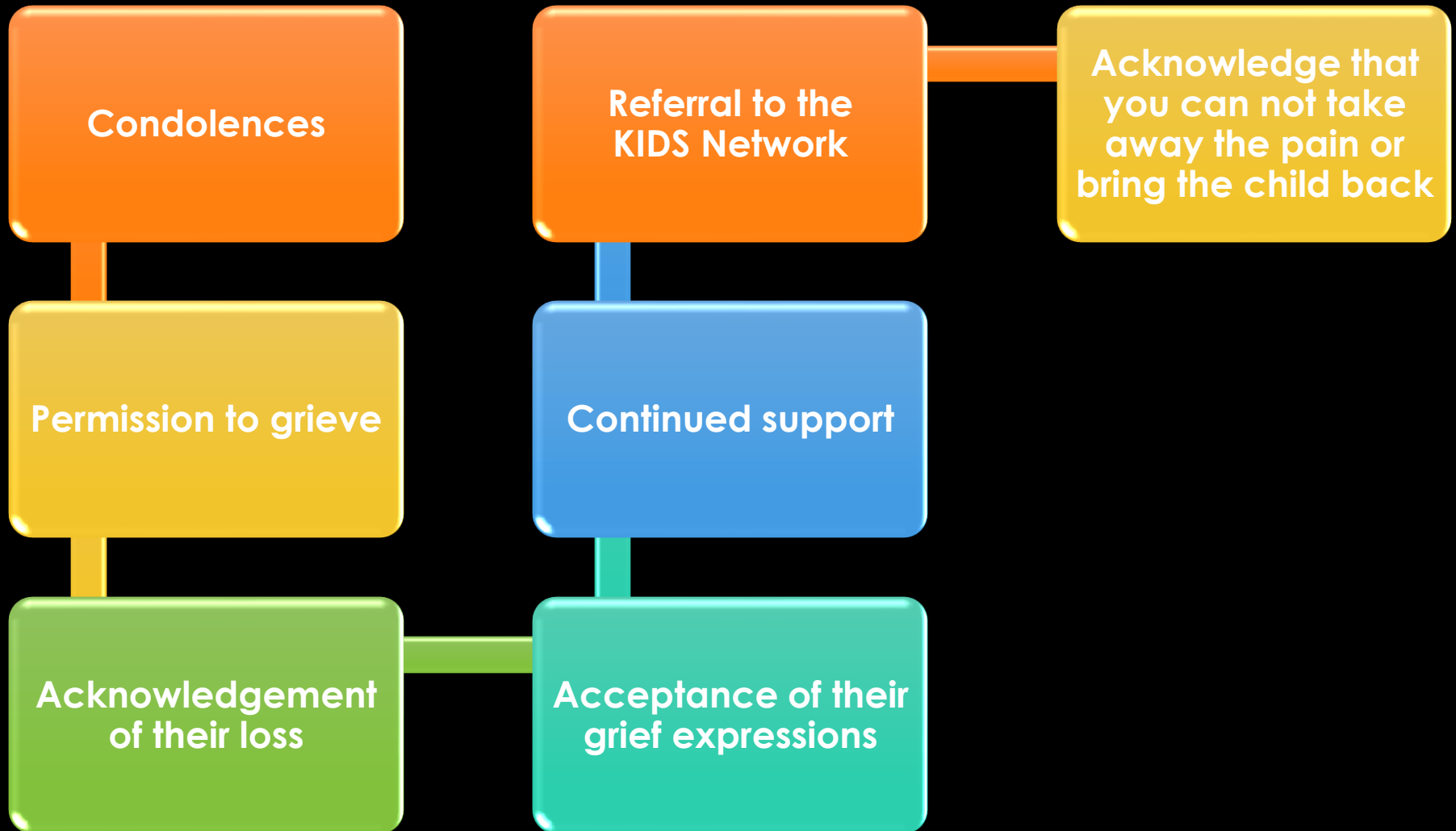
- Stoic
- Protecting
- Distant
- Quiet
- Angry
- Feel left out

WHAT DO PARENTS WANT?

- Tell their story
- Listening-want to be heard
- Visit with parents who have lived through it
- Memorialize/remember their child's life had value regardless of age of child



WHAT YOU CAN OFFER--



HOW TO SUPPORT FAMILIES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED INFANT LOSS— COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Actively Listen
- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask non-judgmental questions
- Attend—eye contact, body language, verbal following
- Paraphrase, summarize and encourage



COMMUNICATING WITH THE BEREAVED

- Use the child's name.
- Use a calm & directive voice.
- Let them tell you what happened.
- Be empathic.
- Be non-judgmental.

SOME THINGS YOU CAN SAY

- Starter Questions:
 - I'm calling from WIC to check in with you?
 - How have you been?
 - Can you share with me about your pregnancy?
- If there has been a loss:
 - I am so sorry to hear you have had a loss.
 - I would like to hear your story. What can you share with me?
 - Wait through the silence, if any.
 - When did you discover that something wasn't going as planned?
 - Did you decide to name the baby? If so, what is it?
 - What can you tell me about your support system?
 - Would you be open to receiving grief information from the KIDS Network?

KIDS NETWORK, INC

There is a free statewide grief support program called the KIDS Network, Kansas Infant Death and SIDS Network. They will send a grief packet, let you know what grief resources are in your area and basically be available if you just need someone to talk to.



[Grief & Bereavement](#) > [Grief Support Resources](#)

Grief Support Resources

Network Support Meetings provide peer support for parents, grandparents, relatives, friends, caregivers, and child care providers who have experienced the loss of a loved one due to SIDS or other sudden infant death, miscarriage or stillbirth. The meetings are held on a regular monthly basis with follow-up for those individuals who would like individual support. We can also help arrange peer-to-peer support as well. Support meetings are held in Salina, Topeka, and Wichita, Kansas.



Parents



Grandparents



Children/Siblings



Caregivers

Make A Referral To The KIDS Network

Click here for a referral form

COPING STRATEGIES

- Journaling
- Scrapbooking
- Prayer
- Poetry
- Memorial
 - Planting a tree, bench, building, fund, etc.



COPING STRATEGIES

- Visiting grave site or memorial site
- Contact with people (especially bereaved)
- Talking
- Reading
- Music

Unhealthy coping strategies are:

- Tobacco use, illicit drugs, alcohol, and unhealthy foods



A hand holding a small object, with a colorful, abstract background.

EVERY LOSS HOLDS POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

- Chance to deepen and expand oneself.
- Chance to complete other losses.
- Chance to be reached by others.
- Chance to reach out to others.

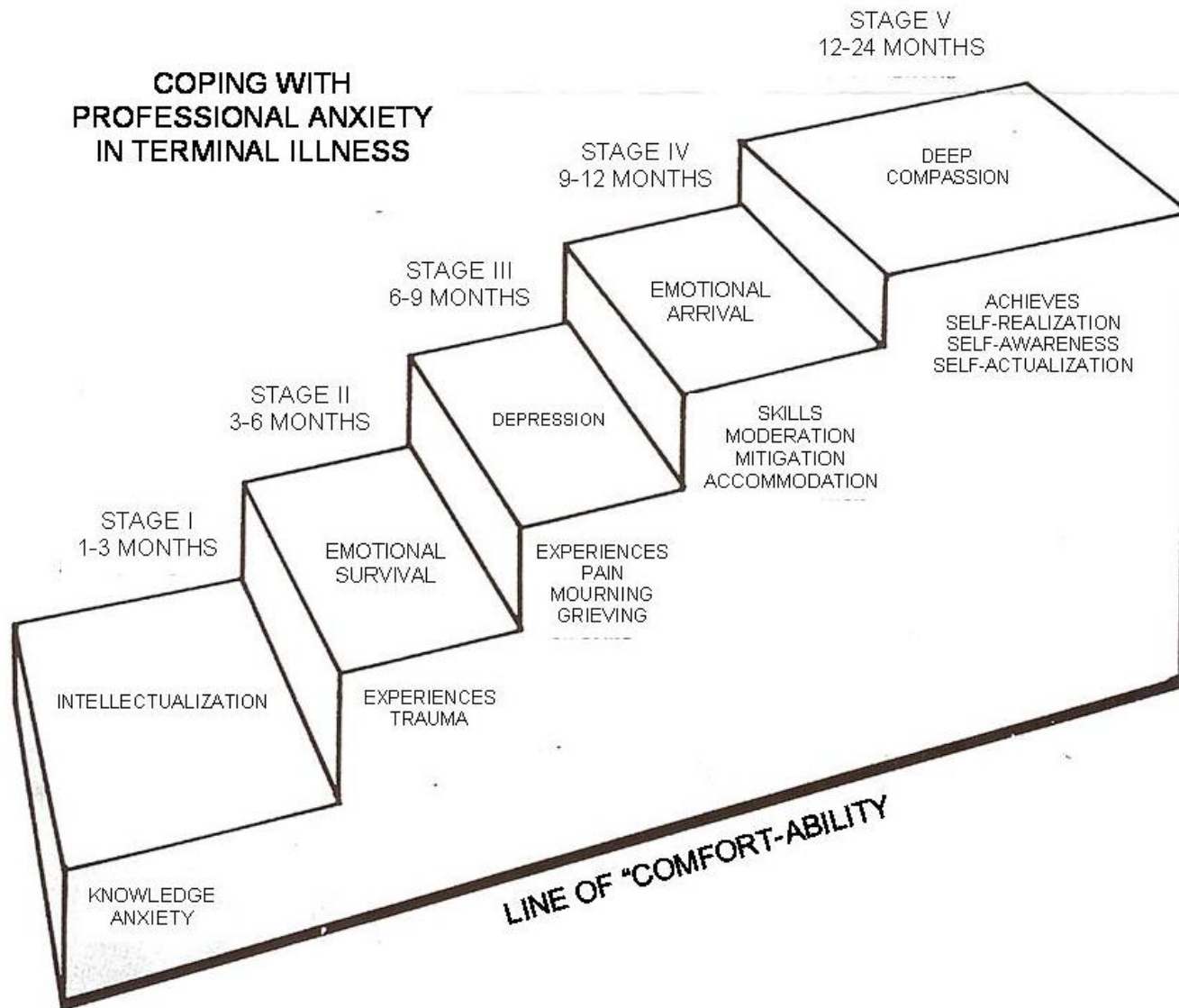
SECONDARY TRAUMA

Over aware
of our own
losses.

Apprehension
of pending
loss.

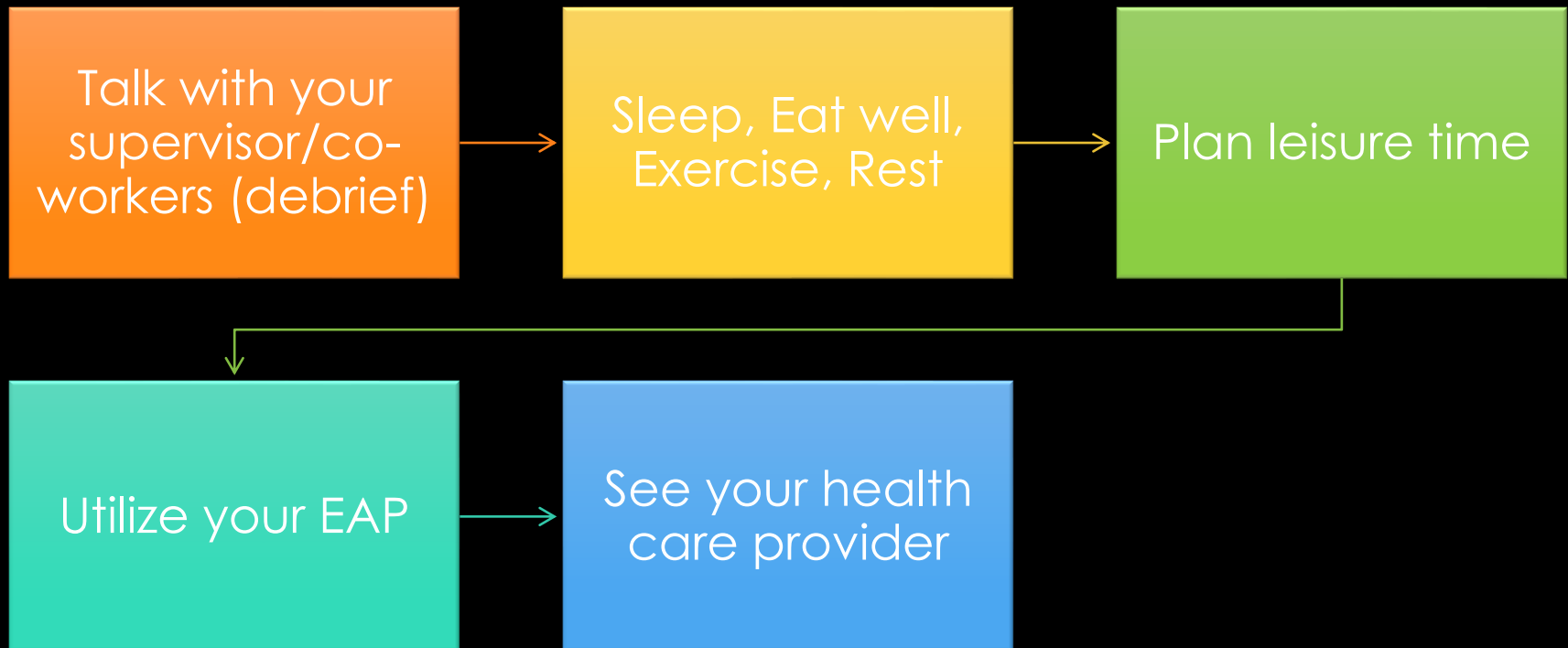
Anxiety about
one's own
mortality.

COPING WITH PROFESSIONAL ANXIETY IN TERMINAL ILLNESS



Harper, B. (1977). Death: The Coping Mechanism of the Health Professional. Greenville, S.C.: Southeastern University Press, Inc.

STRESS RELIEF: CARING FOR YOURSELF



WHERE TO REFER?

Kansas Infant Death and
SIDS Network, Inc.

kidsks.org

300 W. Douglas, Suite 145

Wichita, KS 67202

316-682-1301

316-682-1274 (fax)

edirector@kidsks.org

ETHNIC/CULTURAL ISSUES

- Ethnic and cultural differences affect the way professionals feel and act in relation to bereaved.
- Grief is expressed in a variety of ways from culture to culture.
- We cannot determine pathology derived from one culture.



AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE

- Grief phases that may be portrayed:
 - Shock
 - Stage of violent grief
 - Disorganization
 - Longer period of reorganization
- Grief reactions:
 - Crying
 - Change in appetite
 - Use of music—gospel, jazz, blues, etc.

AFRICAN AMERICAN TRADITIONS

- Funeral may be delayed several days to enable all to attend.
- Friends and relatives will make every attempt to attend the funeral.
- “Nurses” are women who care for those overwhelmed by grief.
- Flower girls are the female counterpart of the pallbearer.

HISPANIC AMERICAN CULTURE

- Factors affecting grief
 - Rural life—they understand the cycle of birth and death. Death must occur so that life can begin.
 - Infant mortality—high rates of infant mortality allow them to accept what happens simply because they are more familiar with it; and, thus more accepting.
 - Poverty—puts people in continual contact with death.
 - Religion—Death is all in the scheme of things. Life is a mere stage in one's existence.

HISPANIC AMERICAN TRADITIONS

- Funeral arrangements are made as quickly as possible.
- The bereaved grieve openly.
- Children are expected to take part in the wake and funeral.
- Novenas are said during the nine-day period following the death.
- Candles are taken to the church altar.
- The extended family gathers in sorrow and consolation.

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